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The intervention from the designer's perspective and the interviewee's role

Ozioma is an Ebo or a Nigerian word that means good news. And that is at the heart of the news releases that we produce. We try to focus on the good that's happening in the African American community with respect to whatever health topic we're discussing; as opposed to always showing what's bad with the African American community or how they are at the lower end of all the comparisons that are being made with regards to health.

The purpose of Ozioma is to create locally relevant, race specific health stories and distribute them via Black newspapers to African American populations. The reason why we started with black newspapers is because it was such a unique niche and a meaningful niche. These newspapers are trusted and valued. And while general population newspapers have been waning and declining in their circulations and some newspapers shutting down altogether, that kind of decline has not – or that level of decline has not been seen in the minority serving newspapers. And we believe this approach, this Ozioma approach, isn't limited to just newspapers. Black newspapers was just the original medium that we chose, but it could be applied to radio or television. The key is to find that local angle, and even among the newspapers, the print newspapers that have been downsizing and cutting staff and cutting pages, we see an even more importance or dependence on truly local information being communicated through these media. And so that is the key, we believe, to making sure that these health messages get to the media and get to the target populations and audiences that they would be most relevant for.

The ultimate goal in distributing these news releases was to get these stories published and thus have all of these people read these stories and be informed by these stories. So thus, increasing public awareness of these cancer related issues that we were promoting through these news releases.

We know from data that there is a gap, there is a disparity between African Americans and other racial ethnic groups in the knowledge and in the behaviors related to cancer prevention and cancer screening. And so, because we are health communication scientists, we were especially interested in trying to promote the awareness, the increased awareness of these prevention behaviors. And the way that we thought would reach the most people would be through media and through in particular the specific media channel which is a trusted and valued source of information for this target population.

And so, we developed these customized news releases for twelve communities. And every other week we would send them a specific or customized release for their community. And these range from topics that are specific to cancer, like breast cancer or prostate cancer, but also related to risk factors related to cancer. So, for example, tobacco, or physical activity or diet. And so, we create an editorial calendar for the year, and we use information like monthly commemoration dates to help to frame our story in a context that the media would be more likely to welcome and actually adopt. So, we had been doing that in our Ozioma study for five years. And we were discussing what more could we do to this current project. What could we do to

answer additional research questions that have arisen out of Ozioma One.

So, in Ozioma Two when we were trying to define what questions we wanted to answer, we decided that the most important finding that we learned in Ozioma One was that localization matters. So, we knew that the more local a news release was the more likely it was going to be picked up by any newspaper. And so, we wanted to build upon that finding. And the way that we decided we would pursue that is to involve the American Cancer Society. We wanted to find an agency or an organization that had local reach, local folks on the ground who could provide us with information about local people. And in the way that we were doing Ozioma One, we were limited in terms of the local data that we could provide. We could only provide data that we could find ourselves online. And most of the time, those data are your basic health data that you can get the major governmental data bases. And so, if we were going to be truly getting local data, we would need to have people on the ground in each of these communities providing those data for us. And so, with the help of the American Cancer Society and their local affiliates, we identified people in each of these communities—news specialists we're calling them—to provide that information for us.

While we had started Ozioma Two, the announcements for stimulus funding had come out. And we had known already from our work in Ozioma One, that it would be very helpful to have a tool or an application wherein we could easily find the local data that we could insert into our news releases. And so out of that grew an idea of actually developing a computer program that would do the steps that we do here for our news service to find and insert local data. And so through the stimulus funding opportunities we were able to apply for an administrative supplement to our Ozioma Two project and develop the Ozioma Online program.

I think Ozioma Two in particular, has opened the door for so many more questions that we can ask, and some of them exciting to me in particular. So we have the opportunity with this project to build upon some of the findings that we've already generated. And perhaps in a different way tried to answer these questions with the time that we have left on the project.

One question that we are hoping to answer with the data that we're collecting in Ozioma Two is what makes any one particular newspaper more likely to adopt our press releases compared to another newspaper. And we know from our Ozioma One study that there are newspapers that will run every single news release that we send them and there are newspapers that won't run any. What makes those two newspapers different? And so we have specifically begun to collect some more newspaper related or newspaper level characteristics to identify what those changes or those factors might be. And then we're also addressing some of the efforts that our news specialists have been undertaking with the newspapers on their own.

On Ozioma One and through the beginning of Ozioma Two, I was the project manager. And last year I began the transition to principle investigator of the Ozioma Two research study. And on Ozioma Online I am technically the project director as Matt Kreuter is the PI of the center and the administrative supplement went to the center.

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